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AGENDA ITEM 4 (a): GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

THE FUTURE COURSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Report of the Executive Director*

*Addendum*

## ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNEP TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION 17 MAY 1993

1. Mr. Chairman, honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, and staff: Good morning. To those of you joining this meeting for the first time this morning, a very warm welcome indeed. To those of you who have been with us for the past week, welcome anew, and I am glad to see that you are still with us. Gigiri is perhaps unique among United Nations headquarters in that it is the only one in the developing world. May these surroundings provide inspiration and understanding for the important work we have to do this week.

2. For the past 20 years we have concerned ourselves with the health of the environment. We have saved species, reduced toxic emissions, campaigned against the destruction of rain forests, defended agricultural land from spreading deserts, raised public awareness about climate change and convinced Governments and the private sector to act to reverse the depletion of the ozone layer. But as our recent state of the environment report shows, we continue to place an incredible burden on this planet. I need not convince you that our environmental decision-making has all too often resulted in gridlock: public distrust, industry short-sightedness, scientific and technical uncertainty, political grandstanding and faulty decision-making have all impeded our progress. And now, as we face particularly perverse environmental challenges, we find that we do not have the tools to do the job.

3. How do we approach problems of unprecedented scope and complexity? How do we improve our quality of life without destroying the environment for generations to come? How do we take decisions in the face of uncertainty, knowing that the cost of inaction is simply too high? How do we influence the shifting patterns of population growth, trade and economic power? How do we balance global interdependence and legitimate national desires? How do we answer the profound questions of equity, of winners and losers, of conflict over food and land, of third world development? Jim MacNeill put the question very bluntly - with the world's population on the



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way to over 10 billion over the next 40 years, how can we multiply food calories by four, energy use by six, income - say - by eight, much more evenly distributed of course, without pushing this planet beyond critical thresholds that we are only now beginning to understand.

4. In the 20-year march from Stockholm to Rio, UNEP played an impressive role in building awareness of environmental issues around the world, in catalysing action. For that task there was none better suited than Dr. Mostafa Tolba. Charming, sometimes stubborn, but always persuasive, Dr. Tolba's intellect, hard work and dedication have been indispensable in guiding the development of this organization. But the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) marks a new beginning. UNCED gave us, first, the endorsement of your Governments to the concept of sustainable development, its political legitimacy. UNCED gave us the commitment of your Governments to a new, frighteningly large agenda, Agenda 21. UNCED gave us the signature of your Governments to new legal instruments on biodiversity and climate change. UNCED gave us the call of your Governments to create a new institution: the Commission on Sustainable Development, and to strengthen and enhance UNEP. UNCED gave us the creation by your Governments of a new process, a process characterized by inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and consensus-building. This Governing Council is one forum in which Governments can turn some of the intents of Rio into specific and concrete policies and actions.

5. Last Monday, when I welcomed you, I spoke of three obligations: obligations of the secretariat, of this Governing Council, and of Governments. I suggested that if we, the secretariat, were to fulfil the mandate and to contribute to the full implementation of Agenda 21, we needed clearer priorities to be established and we needed the resources to deliver results. In return, I indicated that there were obligations on the secretariat. During the past week you have been most diligent in tackling that difficult but essential task of priority setting, and I have every confidence that with goodwill and perseverance we will succeed in charting a new direction for change. The passion and strength of resolve that is evident in the papers submitted by the Group of 77 and China reminds us forcefully of the necessity and urgency for change. The document drafted by the European Community reminds us that when we embark on this change, we must do so with care, so as not to inadvertently abandon the very elements that were critical to past successes. And others of you in the debate have wisely observed that these two views are not mutually exclusive.

6. In the days ahead I will continue to listen and ultimately be guided by the emerging consensus. But this morning you have asked me to share with you a few thoughts about redirection in this time of United Nations reform. Document UNEP/GC.17/28 outlines some of those preliminary views. They will certainly continue to evolve as they are informed by serious and thoughtful dialogue, and as we learn from our experiences.

7. When I arrived at this organization some four months ago, one of the first things I did was to look for a concise statement of the organization's mission. There isn't one. UNEP takes its mandate from a General Assembly resolution, 16 volumes of legislative authority from regular sessions of Governing Councils, four volumes of decisions from special sessions, separate obligations deriving from multilateral conventions on the environment, and 40 chapters of UNCED Agenda 21. All of which, to varying degrees, bind UNEP, define its policy and set its priorities. I won't even pretend to be familiar with all that those papers contain, but I do know that the end result is lack of clarity and clear focus about our mission.

8. When I think of priorities, I start with two fundamental points of reference. The first is that the achievement of sustainable development demands the integration of environment and development. The greater the degree of integration, the greater likelihood of sustainability. In that equation the particular expertise that UNEP brings to bear is the environmental component. But to really achieve sustainable development will require a relationship with those who bring other knowledge and skills associated with development. We cannot do it alone. My second belief is that as we define the ground rules for sustainability, we must work on three fronts: science, social consensus and public policy. UNEP is particularly well positioned to bring about the necessary convergence of sound science, informed social consensus, and coherent and timely public policies. Consequently our programmes must employ the best science, both the natural and physical sciences, and the social sciences. Our programmes must contribute to attitudinal and behavioural change that really brings about social understanding and consensus. And our programmes must continue to catalyse effective public policies.

9. If we are to be faithful to Agenda 21, it seems to me clear then that one of our priorities must be capacity-building. Although UNEP can point to some very specific successes, we have not had a concerted, coherent and consistent approach to this matter. Genuine capacity-building requires a systemic analysis which links a number of components. Among them are the establishment of environmental institutions and machinery, the development of policies and strategies - call them green plans or sustainable development strategies - the preparation and enforcement of laws and regulations, the development and use of economic instruments and market-based incentives, mechanisms for gathering, assimilating and disseminating information, training of human resources in relevant technical disciplines, the development of new analytical tools such as national environmental profiles, impact assessment, environmental accounting, environmental audits, environmental indicators, environmental education, community involvement, technology development and transfer, and financing.

10. Some of these components could be services by our resident expertise in such areas as environment law and governance, or in information systems. I have heard you comment most favourably this past week on our information clearing-houses on cleaner production and ozone action. Other components are going to require that we mobilize others, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, when we deal with environmental education; the United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and regional banks, when it comes to financing; organizations like the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations where specific technical expertise may be required. And even then, the development of the wide range of management tools will mean, for UNEP, new conceptual work and new partnerships. I think here of our fledgling work on natural-resource accounting and the emerging field of trade and the environment.

11. When we define capacity-building in this way, ultimately the test of relevance and priority for all of the activities of UNEP may well be the degree to which they contribute to capacity-building. May I, just as an addendum - as I was mentioning mobilizing financial resources - indicate that I believe UNEP has yet to realize its full potential as one of the three GEF partners. Our contribution has been in supporting the scientific review and perhaps in mobilizing some resources. But it is my opinion that we have to be much more vigilant and assertive in our contributions to the policy discussions, and the evolving shape of that institution.

12. A second priority is catalysing resources, catalysing responses to environmental problems. We do that and we do it well. We do it by bringing Governments together, either to develop policies, to develop programmes or to negotiate agreements. Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 asks UNEP to take the leading role in international environmental law. Most of our successful programmes - not just our law centre - have a legal element to them. It is a foundation on which we can build, especially in the area of taking existing agreements and making sure they are implemented better, and better-oriented to the economic needs of developing countries. The ozone accords, the most effective instruments of international environmental law ever established, can be strengthened. Implementation rather than future regulation may well be the centre of that programme. CITES, for which we provide a secretariat, is in the process of reorienting itself from being largely focused on the need to preserve species to the need to use species sustainably within the matrix of economic development, and we are supporting that reorientation. The regional seas programmes have shown some tremendous successes, particularly in the Mediterranean. The geographical scope of these successes is expanding, more recently to the Black Sea, and could be expanded further as could legal instruments dealing with land-based sources of marine pollution, with marine mammals and with unsustainable practices such as driftnet fishing. The UNEP-brokered freshwater programmes illustrate what our Secretary-General refers to as preventive diplomacy. They show that provision for the management of international freshwater resources can limit points of conflict before they spin out of control.

13. The link between resource scarcity and security is becoming ever more clear. Beyond this, Rio gave the world two new conventions: that on climate change, in which we have been given a supporting role, one to fill the tremendous number of knowledge gaps particularly in the socio-economic impacts area. Similarly, we are playing a supportive and I believe essential role in the early stages of negotiation of the desertification convention. The other convention to come out of Rio was, of course, biological diversity - that is, and will be for some time to come, a major preoccupation. We negotiate agreements because multilateralism continues to hold out the greatest promise for increasing international cooperation and coordination. Both of these are essential for the resolution of global and even regional environmental problems. And there is much more to do. We can help shape a new kind of environmental law for the future.

14. But our catalytic activities are not limited to environmental law and governance. We must continue to be a focal point for emerging issues in the wise and sustainable management of natural resources, whether it's the rhino or degraded land, biodiversity or water, UNEP can make the connections that result in real solutions. For example, our added value on atmospheric issues is that we make the link between such things as ozone depletion and agriculture, ozone depletion and biodiversity, ozone depletion and the marine environment - we make the connection between the impact on our natural resources and, finally, on our economic well-being.

15. I am delighted to tell you that even as we were struggling with our deliberations last week, we were also negotiating in New York. Those negotiations approved the bringing together of all water programmes in the United Nations system to UNEP, a recognition of our ability to catalyse action.

16. As a third priority, I note that Agenda 21 expects us to sense the environment, to know the state of the environment at any point in time. But that is not an end in itself; we must not collect data simply for the sake of collecting data. I am very aware of the gap that exists between collecting information and assessing it, and being able to use it effectively as a management tool. Surely our focus must be on providing

early warning, getting the information to those who need it when they need it, in a format which can be used to support sound decision-making. It was our early warning on ozone, on toxic waste, on biodiversity, that triggered significant action. That being said, our current Earthwatch programme is not without its critics - it needs to be refocused and I thank you for your most useful suggestions as we undertake our programme review.

17. Those are three priorities and only three: capacity-building, catalysing environmental responses, and sensing the environment. They are only three but they make a significant contribution to conserving our natural resources, strengthening the capabilities of Government and, ultimately, in playing their part in eradicating poverty. I didn't mention human settlements but as you will see later this morning, we have a unique opportunity to make progress in that area as well.

18. So, priority-setting was obligation number one. Let me return to the second obligation, the provision of resources to do the job. Almost a year ago the world's leaders came together at Rio for the Earth Summit; a year later, the question being asked by many is this: what happened to the Agenda agreed at Rio? Agenda 21 called for UNEP's role to be enhanced, for its resources to be expanded, and yet the budget as prepared last week has shrunk. UNEP's proposed budget is less than many environmental non-governmental organizations. Donor Governments seem prepared to put $1.3 billion over three years into the GEF to support but four global initiatives, but much less than one-quarter of that amount to support the entire Environment Fund with the mandate we have placed before us. Is it any wonder that our critics view with some skepticism the Rio commitment? This question has been asked loudly of this Governing Council, and it needs an answer. We are all ready and willing to implement our part of Agenda 21, but if Governments are serious in wanting us to do that, they must find the resources that we need. We cannot in good faith play a shell game, moving one programme here, moving a budget line there, calling this implementation of Agenda 21. That Agenda is qualitatively and quantitatively different from the programme and budget presented. We must not only increase the level of support, we must expand the base of contributions from the current 10 per cent who pay 90 per cent of the bills. Every contribution, no matter how small, is valuable.

19. I ask you to look again at last week's budget and ask yourselves, is this contribution a reflection of the commitment made by my head of Government before the international community, or is it a retreat from a very solemn undertaking. I trust your commitments will be honoured.

20. The third obligation lies with the Secretariat, and I quote from Agenda 21: "In the spirit of reform and revitalization of the UN system, implementation of Agenda 21 and other conclusions of UNCED shall be based on an action- and result-oriented approach and consistent with the principles of universality, democracy, transparency, cost-effectiveness and accountability". We must change. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, we must be the change that we wish to see in the world. And this process of change has begun. Change number one: results. A results management approach is being developed to shift the focus of our staff and programmes from the accomplishment of tasks to the achievement of results. It is causing us to ask, how do we know that what we are doing is what people really need? It will result in a redesign of our planning process; it will result in the instilling of a client service ethic in our staff, and staff performance will be judged on results achieved.

21 Change number two: empowerment and accountability. We need to unleash the intellectual talent and the creativity in our organization. We need to better understand the difference between line management and

functional management. Contrary to public belief, all decisions do not need to be taken in Nairobi; all decisions do not need to be taken by senior managers. We must set a policy framework and then delegate: let the manager manage but establish clear accountabilities.

22. Change number three: personnel practices. Hiring and promotion policies of the United Nations often border on the perverse. We will not be able to attract the cadre of able professionals required to make this institution credible unless some changes are made. The best people should be able to look forward to rapid promotion; the worst should be kept out, and when they are already in, told to perform or to leave. This can be done while respecting the need for regional and gender balance at the level of the secretariat as a whole. We will be redesigning our performance appraisal systems and we will be providing training opportunities for our staff. I am absolutely committed to this UN headquarters becoming the flagship for the entire UN system of enlightened human resource management practices.

23. Change number four: partnerships. Implementing sustainable development demands that we must, once and for all, work together creatively and constructively in true partnerships at every level. Governments will no longer tolerate duplications of services within the United Nations, or programmes delivered by one body that are at cross-purposes with that of another. No more can we abide the petty territorial squabbling among individual systems which has hampered progress in the past: constraints on the availability of resources and the urgent need for results simply will not allow it. UNEP will reach out to others, supporting them as they play their critical roles. We will be a team player. In particular, the Commission on Sustainable Development will have our full support and cooperation; that high-level political forum they provide will ensure that our priorities, policies and programmes will always be kept before the public. And, as an organization with issues in search of resources, we will pursue aggressively those organizations with resources in search of issues.

24. And the list goes on. Programme review - when do we close down programmes? Do we have unsuccessful programmes? Should we enable others to provide the service themselves? Can we harness the market? One of our biggest successes in the field of public information has come from a television trust that we helped to set up, but which now operates independently. Structural change: I have always been taught that form follows function. If environmental problems need to be approached from an ecosystemic perspective, then why are we organized in a fragmented, sectoral way? We need people to come together for a task, to complete it, and then reassemble when the next task comes along. We need to encourage horizontal cooperation and joint management and decision-making. This is not a one-person organization.

25. And I haven't spoken of transparency, accessible information, understandable financial management systems, internal communications, review of contracting procedures and policies, information sharing, demonstration of value for money. I have a vision of UNEP in the next four years. It will be a vibrant institution in this post-UNCED period. We will be responsive to your needs; we will be service-oriented and we will win the trust and confidence of your Governments. Our regional presence will be felt and we will be credible and attract partners to our cause. We will justify our existence not by the quantity of resources we throw at a problem, but by the sheer calibre and excellence of the input we make. We will be an intellectual powerhouse, attracting the best and the brightest. We will be agile, avoiding the build-up of a paralysis of a labour-intensive bureaucracy. We will put the resources where they need to be at the particular moment in time. People from all around the world will

want to work with us because we will be on the leading edge. We will display a bias for action, becoming an agent of change, challenging ecologically blind programmes and the veneer of environmental protection.

26. The policies and programmes we pursue will move beyond rhetoric. We will deliver tangible improvements in the health of the world's overburdened environments, we will deliver tangible improvements in the quality of life of all people. Those are commitments.

27. Impossible, you say? I am not naive - I know that action will not happen simply because at a visceral level environmentalists want to save this planet. Even exquisite logic alone is not enough to convince our publics to disrupt our comfortable way of life. I know that I cannot simply say to you, trust me, and resources will immediately start flowing. I know that I cannot wave a magic wand and instantly transform this organization. But what I am sure of is that with vision and pragmatism we can make a difference. You have here a team of professional women and men that are absolutely committed to making that change. And let me be clear: I do want to cause constructive damage to the status quo.

28. Mr. Chairman, the United Nations itself is being transformed. As we move from one world order to another, not yet fully defined, we have heightened expectations and hope. For peace, a world free of the threat of war. For greater international cooperation, for a better life for every man, woman and child, for individual economic opportunity and social advancement, for participation in political life, for a world free from dangers of environmental pollution, for a world that is sustainable. We generally think of peace as freedom from war and, certainly, when we take up arms against each other we are not at peace. But neither are we at peace if there is not enough food to eat, if there is inadequate shelter, if we are sick and cannot get medical aid, if we are impoverished and cannot hope to escape poverty's grip. In these terms, millions of our brothers and sisters cannot be said to be at peace.

29. In my four-year term, I hope to mobilize both UNEP and Habitat to realize their real potential as instruments of peace. This is my pledge to you. Thank you.

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